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# Comparing deputies' and voters' support for Europe: The case of Portugal

## ABSTRACT

*In this article, we compared and tried to explain deputies' and voters' perceptions about various dimensions of European integration. The general assertion that the political elite's perceptions tend to be more pro-integration finds some support in our analysis, but the results indicate this difference – in the Portuguese case – is smaller than has been suggested in the mainstream literature. The data also showed citizens are more in favour of enlargement than their representatives are. We also observe these assertions hold true only for the deputies of the three parties with experience of government. Finally, we try to explain the divide between a voter and their deputy's position on European integration, and we observed that the main explanatory variable for a narrow divide is political interest and information (which also explains the voters' probability of having an opinion).*

## KEYWORDS

European Union  
political representation  
Portugal  
Euro-scepticism

1. A referendum was also held in Ireland, where 70 per cent of the vote was in favour.
2. As *Eurobarometer* polls show, public support for European integration flagged during the 1990s and has remained at a much lower level to this day.
3. In the *Eurobarometer* survey of December 2009, 52 per cent of Portuguese, 57 per cent of the EU-15 and 53 per cent of the EU-27 thought their country's membership of the EU was a good thing.

## INTRODUCTION

During the first 40 years of the European Communities, European leaders tended to ignore the role of public opinion in shaping support for the process of European unification. Initially, the European Union (EU) was not conceived as an inclusive political project, but mainly as an elitist and functional solution to structural and macro-economic problems. Few people were suggesting placing coal and steel under a supranational authority would initiate a process that would change the traditional way people thought about government, democracy and citizenship. For this reason, researchers and decision-makers alike suggested at this time that intergovernmental bargaining, elite preferences and the actions of organised interests at the base of European integration was taking place under an aura of 'permissive consensus' – that is, a combination of loyalty, blind faith and apathy on the part of the voters.

Things have changed since then, and this so-called 'permissive consensus' started to unravel at the beginning of the 1990s, during a period in which Europe was moving towards its full political development. In particular, the Danish rejection of the Maastricht treaty, France's narrow approval, and the rejection by the Conservative rebels were the first serious challenges to Europe as a political project.<sup>1</sup> Although the Danish no vote would eventually be solved by conventional intergovernmental negotiations (setting an opt-out for Denmark), the damage was done: there was no turning back for the democratic reformist mood of the 1990s. The public opposition continued in the form of votes for anti-European parties, in the opinion polls and in the referendums subsequently held (above all in the rejection in France and the Netherlands of the draft constitutional treaty and in Ireland of the Lisbon Treaty).<sup>2</sup>

In the midst of this growing Euro-scepticism, citizens have come to question, protest and mobilise against Europe. In other words, European public opinion has become 'politicised'. Not surprisingly, political actors are responding to this development. On the one hand, new Euro-sceptic groups have recently been formed at the national and European levels. On the other hand, traditional political forces have also included European issues in their strategies, public discourse, and manifestoes for national elections (Imig and Tarrow 2001; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Koopmans 2007).

This increased 'politicisation' over European issues by national political parties and voters at large has important consequences for political representation. In theory, political parties try to capture voters' concerns about Europe and, once in power, should respond to them. Again, in theory, this process will result in – or at least it will be facilitated by – a fair degree of congruence between deputies and their representatives in their views of Europe. In practice, however, it has been said the mass public is much less enthusiastic towards the European Union than their deputies. Political elites, it is claimed, have pushed European integration beyond the will of the people. Is this true? How real is the divide between political elites and public opinion, and what can explain it?

In this article, these are the questions we hope to answer, specifically for the Portuguese case. We use Portugal as an extreme case, as it is a country in which present public support for European integration is lower than the European average,<sup>3</sup> and where the population is relatively poorly educated, exposed to media and interested in politics (at least compared with the 15 'old' member states). Thus, Portugal is a case in which one would expect

to find an important difference between the population and their deputies in respect of their opinion towards European integration. In doing so, we shall move beyond the existing literature by using data drawn from face-to-face interviews with deputies about their perceptions of Europe.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This article is structured around three main objectives. Our first goal is to assess the degree of congruence between deputies and citizens in relation to six dimensions of European integration. Such an exercise does not go without a certain ambiguity, given the fact that the cognitive levels of voters and deputies on the subject of the structure and processes of the EU remain substantially different. Citizens organise their knowledge about Europe on a basis of abstract mental frames, fed by a variety of sources (principally the media, but also all kinds of social groups, the Internet, books, etc.), with different degrees of sophistication and consistency (Kufer 2009: 36–7). In contrast, deputies' perceptions (institutional representations) are endogenous to the EU political system, and for that reason they tend to express a more elaborate and informed vision of its *modus operandi*.<sup>4</sup> Still, a fair degree of congruence between deputies and those they represent in their views of Europe would increase the probability voters are well reflected and thus the representative process functions adequately.

The conventional wisdom is that elites are more in favour of European integration than the public, but, as has been claimed before, this argument rests on a weak empirical foundation (Hooghe 2003). Extensive research has been carried out on the nature of support for European integration, but there are few comparisons between the views of national deputies and their voters. The few existing studies rely on proxies for assessing deputies' views: for example, party manifestoes or expert judgements (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1991; Gabel 1998; Ray 2003), while the few studies directly considering elite perceptions of Europe focus on *European* rather than on national political elites: on Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Schmitt and Thomassen 2000); on permanent representatives (Beyers and Dierickx 1997); and on senior European Commission (EC) officials (Hooghe 2001).

To our knowledge, the only comparative assessment between national political elites and citizens' opinions about Europe was carried out by Hooghe (2003). Her study demonstrates two dynamics: (1) there is little difference between national political elites and citizens regarding their level of support for the further pooling of authority in the EU in important policy fields; and (2) to a larger degree than the citizens, political elites conceive of European integration as an optimal solution for those policy fields in which externalities go beyond the jurisdiction of the state (e.g. the environment).

In this article, we aim to test to what extent conventional wisdom – according to which deputies are more pro-integrationist than those who vote for them – holds true for the Portuguese case. Hence, we posit:

*H1: Deputies are more in favour of European integration than the electorate.*

Research also reveals deputies tend to adopt more extreme policy positions on both the left and the right of the ideological line (see, for example, Converse 1964; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Miller et al. 1999). Portugal is no different in this regard (Belchior 2008). In line with this theory, it makes sense to argue the political elite will also hold more extreme attitudes about

4. Even if national parliaments still play a marginal role in the EU decision-making process and deputies do not all have the same degree of involvement in European affairs, we cannot ignore the unprecedented level of Europeanisation that has taken place in recent years. Not only have we witnessed the creation of special European affairs committees in all national parliaments, responsible for co-ordinating parliamentary scrutiny of and involvement in EU matters and monitoring government representatives in the council and European Council, but we have also seen changes in the behavioural patterns of national deputies (Auel and Benz 2006).

5. The utilitarian perspective states citizens' support for integration is positively related to their welfare gains from EU integration (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Gabel and Palmer 1995). The identity perspective states Europeans holding negative attitudes towards immigration are more likely to evaluate other European nations unfavourably and are therefore less likely to support European integration (De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; McLaren 2001, 2002). Unfortunately, our data does not allow us to test another important explanatory variable – the materialist/post-materialist values of the individual. According to Inglehart's theory of value change, post-materialist voters are more likely to favour European integration (Inglehart 1977).

Europe than the electorate. In other words, we expect the proportion of strongly pro- or anti-European deputies to be greater than the corresponding proportion of citizens.

*H2: Political elites hold more extreme views about Europe than citizens do.*

The second objective of this article is concerned with assessing the degree of congruence between the European attitudes of deputies and those of their partisans. For this purpose, deputies and the electorate were divided according to the party to which they support. This exercise aims to fuel the debate on the divergence or convergence between voters and their representatives with respect to policy positions, an issue that – so far – has not been sufficiently tested and explained. Representation studies demonstrate there is a reasonable level of congruence between political leaders and their voters (e.g. Converse and Pierce 1986; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996) and that generally speaking the record of left-wing parties tends to correspond better to their electorate's policy positioning (Inglehart 1970; Gibson and Harmel 1998: 225–6; Pierce 1999: 27). While this finding is not confirmed for Portugal (Freire and Belchior 2009), we posit:

*H3: Left-wing party camps display a more congruent position on Europe than their right-wing counterparts.*

The third and final objective of this paper is concerned with explaining the divergent views of the elite and the mass public on European integration. The literature on representation theory shows there is a higher level of representativeness when individuals are strong supporters of a given party and are involved in politics (Barnes 1977; Hill and Anderson 1995; Converse 1964; Zaller 1992). There is no a priori reason not to believe these representation factors hold true for voter and deputy positioning on European integration. Hence, we posit:

- *H4: The distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the voters' party attachment.*
- *H5: The distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the voters' political interest.*

Finally, it has been argued that, among other factors, the party/voter link on the issue of European integration also depends on internal party unity, as the presentation of contradictory messages by various party leaders muddles the cues sent by the party to its supporters (Ray 2003). Hence, our final hypothesis:

- *H6: For any particular party, the distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the degree of unity in the political positioning among the deputies.*

When testing these hypotheses, we need to control for important alternative explanatory factors. Indeed, it may be the case that deputies and those who voted for them hold similar views 'by chance' – that is, they may share characteristics that are likely to make them more Euro-pessimistic or Euro-optimistic independently of the variables described above. Hence, all variables that may explain voter support for European integration should be controlled for, including the voter's educational background, their perceptions about the economic situation and their perceptions about immigration.<sup>5</sup>

## SETTING THE SCENE: THE PORTUGUESE PARTY SYSTEM

Before comparing the positions of voters and their parties in relation to European matters, it is useful to give a quick overview of the Portuguese party system for those readers unfamiliar with it.

With the exception of the Communist Party (PCP – Partido Comunista Português), all Portuguese parties are post-1974 creations.<sup>6</sup> Their constitutional and democratisation context, and in particular their revolutionary dimension, help explain the weak social foundations of Portuguese political parties (Jalali 2007: 62–8). They have not evolved from pre-existing social cleavages, but from a democratic transition process that placed parties at the centre of the new regime (Bruneau 1997; De Sousa 2001; Jalali 2007).<sup>7</sup>

The distance between parties and those they represent was partially compensated by their proximity to the state and access to public resources, as the capacity to redistribute those resources in a selective manner helped parties to institutionalise and consolidate electoral clienteles (De Sousa 2001: 159–60). With the exception of the PCP, which has traditionally recruited its cadres from dedicated activists, the leadership of a party does not spring from among the party activists. Parties remain 'different arrangements of personalities' (Lopes 1997: 30), attracting a multitude of interests and clienteles important to electoral success. This strategic rather than programme-based mobilisation of voters has consequences in terms of the nature of representation and the divide between voters and their representatives.

The PCP was created in 1921 and forced underground five years later: it remained clandestine for 48 years – as long as authoritarian government lasted in Portugal. The PCP played a key role in the revolution of 1974, which helped the party become and remain a major player in the present-day party system, despite the collapse of communism in central and eastern Europe. In the aftermath of the revolution, the PCP was able to build a solid and extensive organisation, superior to that of its adversaries in terms of both material and human resources.

The PCP boasted the largest and territorially most developed party machine, which helped it survive the shock of the end of the Cold War. While remaining one of the most orthodox communist parties in Western Europe, the PCP has been able to adapt to emerging realities. It exerts a very tight control over the leadership of one of the major trade unions (CGTP-IN – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses-Intersindical Nacional) and sponsored the creation of an ecological movement in 1982, which later became a party (PEV – Partido Ecologista 'Os Verdes'). Since 1987, the PCP has run for elections in coalition with the Greens and Democratic Intervention (ID – Intervenção Democrática) as the Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU – Coligação Democrática Unitária).

The PCP was a member of the Comintern until the collapse of this organisation, which is perhaps the reason why European integration was not a major policy priority for its leaders. Rather, they have traditionally resisted any pooling of sovereignty within a supranational body. Their Euro-pessimism only slowly softened in favour of a more sceptical stand due to the party's inevitable engagement in the first round of European elections in Portugal in 1988. Currently, the PCP is a member of the United European Left/Nordic Green Left (UEL/NGL) parliamentary group in the European Parliament.

By contrast, the Socialist Party (PS – Partido Socialista) has never been able to develop a mass organisational structure or levels of affiliation similar

6. From a formal point of view, the Socialist Party (PS – Partido Socialista) had been created in exile one year before the revolution. In reality, however, the party owes much of its existence to the post-1974 democratisation context.
7. Unlike in many other systems, in which parties are voluntary and unregulated civil society associations, political parties in Portugal are strictly regulated constitutional bodies.

8. The successful entry of the BE to Portuguese party politics contrasts largely with the unsuccessful and brief existence of the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD – Partido Renovador Democrático), a small party created in 1985 with the support of the last military president, General Ramalho Eanes. Despite the fact both the BE and PRD have made the moralisation of political (and economic) life their major political quest, the former has been able to mobilise a series of other divisive issues in Portuguese party politics and consolidate its electorate, while the latter was successful in helping the minority PSD (Partido Social Democrata) government to collapse in 1987, at the cost of losing its electoral support and seeing the PSD re-elected with the first absolute majority for a single party.

to other European social democratic parties. At its core it is dominated by liberal-left, well-educated, bourgeois dignitaries, and its decentralised organisational structure shows little coordination between the national headquarters and local branches. The Socialists have also undergone a process of renewal in recent years following their first experience in office as a minority government. Under the leadership of both Guterres and (currently) Socrates, the party's policy stand has moved towards the centre, with a catch-all appeal that attempts to reconcile the practices of market liberalism with democratic socialist principles – in line with former British prime minister Tony Blair's 'Third Way'. This partly explains the party's electoral success, at the cost of leaving the factions further to the left unsatisfied with its economic policy preferences while in office. The Socialist leadership and electorate have always been supportive of European integration. The party is a member of the Party of European Socialists.

This renovation of the left was not enough to address emerging social tensions and left space for a new force to appear, one that embraced the post-materialist discourse that had been ignored by both the communist and socialist formations. The new radical left-wing party, the Left Bloc (BE – Bloco de Esquerda), emerged from the convergence of two old extreme left-wing parties and a political movement and formed a party to compete in the 1999 general election.

This left-wing formation was able to attract an urban, well-educated, libertarian electorate that felt increasingly unrepresented by the two dominant left-wing formations (the PS and PCP). The entry of this new party has had an important impact on the party system. The Portuguese party system has evolved from a four to a five-party structure, and this has had important implications in terms of political representation and electoral competition.<sup>8</sup> As Freire put it,

For the period 1975–96, the post-materialist issue dimension was irrelevant both as a domain of competition and of identification. ... With the emergence of the BE as a parliamentary force, however, new political issues have become a domain of competition between the left (particularly the BE, but also the PCP and PS) and the right (PSD and particularly the CDS-PP). From 1996 until at least 2005, post-materialism has been a pertinent dimension of policy competition, although only with medium-level significance.

(Freire 2005: 29–30)

The BE has become a permanent feature in national party politics and is gradually making its way both at the local and European level. The BE elected its first MEP in the 2004 European elections. In the European Parliament, the BE (like the PCP) is an associate member of the UEL/NGL parliamentary group.

The PSD is often labelled 'the most Portuguese of all parties'. The designation is not so inaccurate in the sense that it is a catch-all party, embracing representatives whose policy positions range from the moderate left to the liberal and conservative right, and it is a party with a broad territorial presence. The two major identifying elements cutting across the socially diverse elements of its electorate are a common hostility towards the state and its administration and a general sympathy for market rules and private property. Like the Socialists, the PSD has a weak and flexible organisational structure, allowing local branches great independence. Until the 1990s, the



PSD was associated with the European Liberal Democratic and Reformist Group (ELDR) in the European Parliament. Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, it has aligned itself with the conservative European People's Party (EPP) (Frain 1997).

Finally, the Popular Party (CDS-PP – Centro Democrático e Social-Partido Popular) is essentially a party of notables that has never been able to transform itself into a catch-all party of the right, as it set out to do in its first years of existence. It has fewer resources than its adversaries and is continuously embroiled in leadership quarrels, which is reflected in its ever-changing electoral positioning. The party has swung from Christian democracy to a liberal-conservative, and sometimes to populism, depending on its changing leadership. On various occasions, this has led the CDS-PP to join short-lived tactical coalitions with the two major parties – the PS and the PSD – but the party's small base among the electorate has not allowed it to gain a pivotal position in the formation of a government (Robinson 1996: 961–4). Presently, the party represents the more Christian democratic/conservative segment of the population. Due to its strong Christian democratic background, the party joined the EPP following Portugal's accession to the (then) EEC.

The Euro-sceptic stance of the early 1990s, under the leadership of Manuel Monteiro, not only cost the party the loss of several senior political figures but also led to its expulsion from the EPP in 1992. Following this, the CDS-PP joined the Union for Europe of the Nations Group (UEN). After its massive defeat in the 1997 local elections, Manuel Monteiro resigned and Paulo Portas saw a window of opportunity to consolidate his leadership by returning to the party's Christian democratic roots and setting himself the challenge of keeping all the party's 15 seats in parliament in the general election of 1999, which he eventually did. Since then, the CDS-PP has adopted a Euro-pragmatic stance, which, in turn, led to its return to the EPP in July 2004.

## **HOW GREAT IS THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN VOTERS' AND DEPUTIES' OPINIONS ABOUT EUROPE?**

It is time for us to proceed to our first objective and attempt to discover to what extent deputies' and voters' political evaluations of Europe match each other. In other words, to what extent is the position of deputies on Europe representative of citizens' expectations?

### ***Data***

For this empirical test, we used two surveys conducted in Portugal between the beginning of spring and the end of summer 2008. The mass survey relied on a multi-stage probabilistic sample of Portuguese citizens aged 18 and above who were resident on the mainland (N=1350). Some weighting in terms of age, gender and education was carried out to make the sample more representative of the population profile. A similar questionnaire was used to survey Portuguese deputies on the same topics, with a 60 per cent rate of response. Again, some weighting in terms of party affiliation and gender was carried out to correct any deviation resulting from the composition of parliament in 2008.

### ***Comparing the elite and the citizens***

In order to test Hypothesis H1, according to which deputies are more in favour of European integration than citizens are, we first built an index to measure

9. The five questions are: Do you think that a political Europe is necessary? Do you think that Portuguese membership is a good thing? Do you think that unification of the EU should be pushed further? Are you satisfied with EU democracy? Do you think that the reform treaty is a good text?

	Deputies	Voters
Mean	0.79	0.63
Median	0.75	0.75
Std. Deviation	0.28	0.33

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of deputy and voter support for Europe.

support for Europe, using five dimensions. The index is calculated by measuring the mean of the answers to five questions on European integration. It is a variable with ten values ranging from 0–1, with a score of 0 when the respondent does not agree at all with any of the pro-European statements and 1 when they agree strongly with them all.<sup>9</sup> In Table 1 we present the mean, median and standard deviation of this index for both citizens and deputies, excluding for now those voters who are indifferent or ‘don’t know’.

The data shows Hypothesis H1 lacks clear confirmation. While it is true deputies are slightly more pro-European than voters, the distance between the averages of the two indices is not very important (a 0.13 difference), while the median is identical. We also observe that the standard deviation is slightly more important for voters.

In Figure 1, we compare the distribution of the index ‘support for Europe’, again excluding for now those voters who are indifferent or who ‘don’t know’. There is a relatively high degree of congruence between the voters and deputies taking anti-European on European integration, but the data also shows that more voters than deputies take an intermediate stand, and that the relationship is reversed for those who are very fervent supporters of European integration. Hence, Hypothesis H2, according to which political elites hold more extreme views about Europe than the voters, is only partially confirmed: deputies are more strongly pro-European than voters, but we do

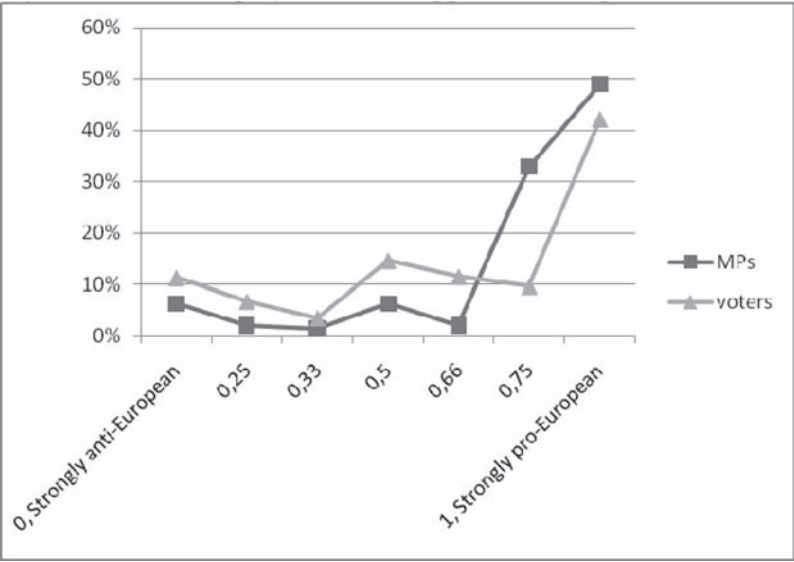


Figure 1: Index of deputy and voter support for Europe.



find a slightly larger proportion of strongly anti-Europeans among the population than among the elite.

Table 1 looks into the specific questions rather than the index and also includes an additional question on enlargement. It shows the average difference between deputies' and voters' opinions in general without taking into consideration party positioning. Overall, as observed above, the opinions of deputies and voters tend to converge both in what they consider to be positive and negative about European integration. The degree of discrepancy is lower than 13 per cent for most dimensions except that relating to greater unification of the EU.

For the most part, mass public opinion is sceptical about deepening the EU (only 41.7 per cent is in favour), contrasting greatly with the political class's efforts to push integration further (73.2 per cent). This lack of citizen support for deepening the EU may illustrate citizens no longer believe the additional pooling of sovereignty means additional gains for them, as if a law of diminishing marginal returns applies to the usefulness of the EU. However, this difference may to some extent be artificial, as the percentages represent an a posteriori two-way division of the answers on a 0–10 scale.

This table also shows that political elites tend to be only slightly more supportive of European integration than the public, except on one dimension of integration – enlargement. Surprisingly, public opinion is slightly more in favour of enlargement than the elites are. However, we should note this is still considered a negative dimension of integration among both the political elites and the public at large. The percentage of those who support enlargement is very low in both cases: less than a third of deputies and voters support further enlargement. There is very possibly a good reason for this: the eastern European enlargement had a short-term negative impact upon the traditional and labour-intensive sectors of the Portuguese economy, such as shoemaking and textiles.

In this survey, we also asked deputies which countries they would accept as EU members and which they would leave outside the European project. The Portuguese political elites ranked Turkey and the Balkans as the first members of the 'club' that should be included, while the few citizens who answered that question favoured Switzerland's entry to the EU.

As noted elsewhere, the main pitfall of survey questions is the relatively high proportion of citizens who do not know or who refuse to answer

Attitude towards the EU	All		
	Voters (%)	Deputies (%)	Diff
The respondent:			
Thinks that a political Europe is necessary.	86.6	91.5	–4.9
Thinks that Portuguese membership is a good thing.	83.5	96.3	–12.8
Thinks that unification of the EU should be pushed further.	41.7	73.2	–31.5
Is satisfied with EU democracy.	56.8	63.2	–6.4
Supports enlargement.	30.2	25.6	4.6
Thinks that the Reform Treaty is a good text.	72.8	76	–3.2
Average	61.9	71	–9

Table 2: Attitude towards the EU: Voters and deputies (all).

(Bacalhau 1994; Lobo 2003). This absence of an opinion could be derived from positive or negative factors, i.e. from ‘permissive consensus’ to ‘political apathy’ explanations (Lobo 2003:100), or simply from candid ignorance about more elaborate aspects of European integration. In our sample, the proportion of respondents who ‘don’t know/don’t answer’ varies according to the question asked: from 10 per cent for the question about Portugal’s membership of the EU to 45 per cent for the question on enlargement and 61 per cent for the question on the Reform Treaty.

We observe two different patterns, reflecting whether the question focuses on the relationship between Portugal and the EU or addresses the EU as a political institution (Lobo 2003). Firstly, when a question is ‘intuitive’ – that is, when it asks for a vague opinion about the EU, such as ‘Do you think that Portuguese membership of the EU is a good thing?’ – the proportion of those who do not know is very low (10 per cent). These questions measure something akin to Easton’s (1965) notion of affective support. On the other hand, when the question is less general and more ‘technical’, the non-response rate increases – 27 per cent do not know if a political Europe is necessary, while 45 per cent do not know if the Lisbon Treaty is a good text.

### ***Comparing deputies and their voters by party***

In Table 3, we show the percentage of deputies and their supporters that agree with a series of European integration proposals that affect EU legitimacy. In order to compare the degree of consensus or discrepancy between deputies’ and voters’ opinions about Europe for a given party, we have used – at the deputy level – the party list within which the deputy was elected as a means of grouping the parliamentarians by party and, at the electorate level, the voters’ party identification, to segment the population by parties.

Despite the degree of convergence between deputies’ and voters’ perceptions of Europe, once we take party positions into consideration we also observe important variations between and within parties for each of the different dimensions of integration.

When accessing the overall support for Europe, we need to distinguish between parties with and parties without experience of government – in other words, parties that have governed alone or in coalition (PS, PSD, PDS-PP) and parties that have not (BE, CDU-PCP). While it has been said political elites are generally more in favour of European integration than citizens at large, this seems to be true – in the case of Portugal – only for government-experienced parties.

Political elites from parties with experience of government are also more pro-European than their supporters, as well as being more pro-European in general. Deputies from both the BE and CDU-PCP are, however, less supportive of European integration and are also less supportive than their traditional party sympathisers. This tendency has already been observed by Marina Costa Lobo, using another data set, in which she showed that ‘minor parties, which have been systematically excluded from government since 1982, have adopted an anti-integration stance’ (Lobo 2003: 115). Since government-experienced parties represent the larger slice of the electorate, the data reconfirms the traditional view that political elites are more supportive of European integration than their party supporters.

There is a greater discrepancy between deputies’ and voters’ perceptions of Europe among parties without experience of government (BE and CDU-PCP).

% agree:	BE			CDU-PCP			PS			PSD			CDS-PP		
	Voters	Deputies	Diff	Voters	Deputies	Diff	Voters	Deputies	Diff	Voters	Deputies	Diff	Voters	Deputies	Diff
Political Europe is necessary.	87.9	100	-12.1	76.1	0	76.1	82.2	98.7	-16.5	90.5	95.6	-5.1	55	87.5	-32.5
Portuguese membership is a good thing.	95.2	66.7	28.5	66	20	46	87.4	100	-12.6	82.1	100	-17.9	83.3	100	-16.7
EU unification should be pushed further.	36.7	66.7	-30	30.8	0	30.8	45.4	85.3	-39.9	43.8	64.4	-20.6	10	75	-65
EU democracy is satisfactory.	48.5	0	48.5	40.8	0	40.8	68.1	64	4.1	51.1	82.2	-31.1	31.6	50	-18.4
Enlargement is a good thing.	42.9	0	42.9	25	80	-55	33.7	23.3	10.4	27	25.6	1.4	17.6	28.6	-11
Reform Treaty is a good text.	60.9	0	60.9	46.7	0	46.7	82.7	93.9	-11.2	80	67.4	12.6	30.8	87.5	34
Average	47.3	33.3	<b>23.1</b>	47.6	16.7	<b>30.9</b>	66.6	77.5	<b>-11</b>	62.4	72.5	<b>-10.1</b>	38.1	71.4	<b>-18.3</b>

Table 3: Deputies' and voters' attitudes towards European integration (%).

We also observe that the most congruent party is the PSD. This clearly fails to confirm Hypothesis H3, according to which left-wing party camps display a more congruent position on Europe than their right-wing counterparts.

While deputies from both left-wing parties without experience of government are not satisfied with European democracy or the prospects of institutional reform (the Reform Treaty), BE deputies display a more positive vision of Europe than CDU-PCP deputies (an average of 33.3 per cent against 16.7 per cent).

CDS-PP supporters are the most sceptical of all voters. They believe Portuguese membership of the EU is a good thing in principle (83.3 per cent), but in practice the country has gained too little from it; hence their discontent with the functioning of the EU and the prospects of reform (only 31.6 per cent are satisfied with EU democracy and 30.8 per cent believe the Reform Treaty is a good text).

This disenchantment may be understood through the lens of a cost-benefit vision of European integration. The traditional basis of CDS-PP support comes from economic sectors that were negatively affected by the implementation of the Common Market and the expansion of Europe eastwards: small farmers, fishermen, shopkeepers and small and medium-size businesses. The Europeanism of the CDS-PP political elites contrasts with the Euro-scepticism of its traditional electorate; however, since the CDS-PP has been

10. The tests were run using current voting intentions or voting practice in the preceding election. We did not observe a significant change in the correlations above.

in government (and its electorate may believe the party can have a greater say in European affairs in the future), the average discrepancy between perceptions at the top and bottom of the party is less significant than one may be led to believe.

Almost all deputies are against widening the EU. Those from the CDU-PCP are largely (80 per cent) in favour – a result (which is inconsistent with the opinions held by other deputies and the majority of citizens) that comes as a surprise, since to a large extent the party's constituency includes unskilled workers whose lives have been negatively affected by the entry of the 12 new central and eastern European members.

Almost all deputies are in favour of deepening the EU. The exception again is those representing the CDU-PCP who are completely against it. PS deputies are the most in favour of pushing further EU unification (85.3 per cent). This comes as no surprise given the party is currently in power. Instead, what comes as a surprise is the fact that CDU-PP deputies are also largely in favour of deepening the Union when their party supporters are by far the most sceptical about it.

While on enlargement there is a consensual negative perception of its effects, on the deepening issue the political elites are more proactive than the electorate. In a way, this confirms the traditional view that the engine of European integration is the consensus among the political elite, but it also denotes the growing scepticism of citizens in relation to the pooling of political powers in Europe.

## EXPLAINING THE DIVIDE

The comparison between deputies' perceptions and those of their party supporters shows that, with some exceptions, the degree of support for the European Union is relatively similar for both groups of interviewees.

The third objective of our research is to explain the divide between voters and their deputies. The operationalisation of each variable is described briefly below, while more detailed information is presented in the appendix.

The dependent variable, the divide between a voter and their deputy's perceptions about the EU, was obtained by calculating the mean index of support for European integration on the part of the party with which the respondent identifies and subtracting it from the voters' index of support for European integration.<sup>10</sup> To test hypothesis H4 (The distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the voters' party attachment), a variable measuring party attachment was introduced. To test hypothesis H5 (The distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the voters' political interest), an index was built incorporating 'the frequency of political discussion' and 'political interest' variables. Finally, in order to test hypothesis H6 (For any particular party, the distance between voters' and their deputies' views on the European Union is directly proportionate to the degree of unity in the political positioning among the deputies), we inserted a variable 'party unity'. This variable is equal to one minus the standard deviation of the index of support for Europe on the part of the party with which the respondent identifies.

To control for other explanatory variables, we included a variable measuring education, an economic evaluation index (at the national and personal level) and an index measuring positive sentiments towards immigrants.

Table 4 shows the results of an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression explaining the divide between deputies and those who voted for them.

In Model 1, we test all variables identified in the literature and in our hypotheses: the voters' political information and interest, the strength of their party attachment, the unity of the party supported and their educational

Independent variable	Dependent variable: Difference between a voter's position and the mean position of the deputies of their party			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Political information and interest	-0.217*** (0.000)	-0.136*** (0.000)	-0.198*** (0.000)	-0.185*** (0.000)
Party attachment	-0.051 (0.146)	-0.070* (0.013)	-0.064* (0.089)	-0.061* (0.027)
Party unity	0.130*** (0.000)			
Education	-0.118*** (0.000)	-0.032 (0.274)	-0.094* (0.014)	
Support for EU		-0.599*** (0.000)		-0.577*** (0.000)
Good economic perceptions			-0.152*** (.000)	
Good perception of immigration			-0.104** (0.005)	
Party identification** – BE				-0.030 (0.287)
Dummy party identification – CDU				0.131*** (0.000)
Dummy party identification – PSD				-0.007 (0.818)
Dummy party identification – CDS-PP				0.022 (0.438)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.095	0.428	0.097	0.439
N	1350			
Valid N	756			
Mean of the dependent variable	0.29			
Standard deviation of the dependent variable	0.25			

\* p < 0.1; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

\*\*Reference group PS

*Table 4: Ordinary least squares estimates of the determinants of the difference between the voter's position and their deputy's mean position.*

background. The data shows that the divide between a particular voter's position and that of their deputy decreases (significantly) as the voter's political information and interest in politics increase – and this supports H5 (the greater the political interest, the narrower the divide). The weight of party attachment in explaining this divide is very low and not significant, while the degree of convergence in the political positioning of the deputies from the same party camp is significant but – contrary to our hypothesis – positively rather than negatively correlated with the divide between voters and deputies. Hence hypotheses H4 (the greater the party attachment, the narrower the divide) and H6 (the greater the party unity, the narrower the divide) are not confirmed.

In Model 2, we insert the 'support for the EU' variable, in order to check if the explanatory variables identified hold even if we control for the voters' EU stance. Such an operation increases the R2 significantly. We observe that the more pro-European a voter is, the narrower the divide between their positioning on Europe and that of their deputy. However, the variables 'political information and interest' remain significant, and the 'party attachment' variable becomes significant at the 0.05 level (although the coefficient is still relatively low). Only education loses its significance.

In Model 3, we introduced the variable likely to explain voters' support for Europe rather than the index itself and we find similar results. The model shows that the variable on European support (good perception of socio-economic conditions, pro-immigrant sentiments) is significant in explaining a narrow divide between a voter and their deputy's position on European integration.

In Model 4, we repeated the exercise carried out in Model 2, while introducing a dummy variable for each party the respondent identifies with. The model shows that, with other things being equal, the divide between a voter and their representative is significantly higher for the CDU than for the PS (in line with what has been discussed above), while this makes no difference for the other parties.

In Table 5, we turn to the voters who do not have an opinion on Europe. To do so, we divided the answers to the above six questions on Europe into two (0 – don't know/no response, 1 – response) and produced an index by taking the mean of the two groups of answers. In Model 1, we tried to assess if the variables explaining a narrower divide are also important in explaining a voter propensity towards having an opinion on European issues. We also included age as a control variable. Again, the data shows that political information and interest index and the degree of education are positively related with the probability of a voter having an opinion, while party attachment and age are negatively correlated. In Model 2, we repeated the operation, including the dummies for party identification, and no new results were produced.

Hence, it appears that those who are educated and informed about, and who are interested in politics are not only more likely to have an opinion about Europe, but are also likely to be closer to the position of their representatives. These results are in line with the main findings of other electoral studies on Portugal. In a similar fashion, the Comparative National Election Project shows that informational intermediaries exert a significant impact on voting choices – particularly in elections where partisan predispositions are less relevant – and that the discussion of political issues is by far the most important source of information (Magalhães 2007).

Independent variable	Dependent variable: Voters knowledge of the European Union	
	Model 1	Model 2
Political information and interest	0.319*** (0.000)	0.314*** (0.000)
Party attachment	-0.091** (0.004)	-0.090*** (0.000)
Party unity	-0.035 (0.269)	
Education	0.221*** (0.000)	0.218*** (0.000)
Age	-0.134*** (0.000)	-0.134** (0.005)
Party identification** – BE		0.019 (0.555)
Dummy party identification – CDU		-0.007 (0.841)
Dummy party identification – PSD		-0.017 (0.611)
Dummy party identification – CDS-PP		0.058 (0.066)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.262	0.263
N	1350	
Valid N	765	
Mean of the dependent variable	0.67	
Standard deviation of the dependent variable	0.20	

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.005; \*\*\* p < 0.001

\*\*Reference group PS

*Table 5: Ordinary least squares estimates of the determinants of the voters' knowledge about the EU.*

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we compared and tried to explain deputies' and voters' perceptions about various dimensions of European integration. Our empirical exercise confirmed certain existing theories, but also showed that several notions of conventional wisdom do not stand up to objective scrutiny.

The general assertion that the political elite's perceptions tend to be more pro-integration finds some support in our analysis, but the results strongly indicate



11. Dichotomised to distinguish those who never discuss politics from those who discuss politics rarely or often.

this difference – in the Portuguese case – is smaller than has been suggested in the mainstream literature on this topic. The data showed that citizens are more in favour of enlargement than their representatives, and demonstrated that in one dimension deputies are more polarised than their voters – they are more strongly in favour of the EU, while the percentage of deputies and voters who are strongly opposed to European integration is almost identical.

On closer examination, these assertions hold true only for the deputies of the three parties that have been in government (PS, PSD and CDS-PP): the deputies of the BE and CDU-PCP are much less supportive of European integration than their supporters. Hence, we do not find support for the belief left-wing parties are more congruent than their right-wing counterparts.

Finally, we tried to explain the divide between a voter and the positioning of their deputy on European integration, and observed that the main explanatory variable for a narrow divide is political interest and information. We do not find strong support either for the party attachment or party unity hypotheses. Interestingly, political interest and information – together with education – also explain the probability of a voter having an opinion on European issues. Hence, uninterested and uninformed voters are more likely to lack an opinion on Europe or, if they have one, to disagree with their representatives.

## APPENDIX

All variables, apart from education and age, are computed in such a way as to take a continuous value between 0 and 1.

### *Index of support for Europe*

The dependent variable is an index based on the following survey questions:

- Do you think that a political Europe is necessary?
- Do you trust the European Union?
- Generally speaking, do you think that Portuguese membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
- Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?
- All in all, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union?

The index we computed was calculated by measuring the mean of the values for the answers to the questions above.

The measurement of political interest is an index based on the following survey questions, computed in a similar way as the index above.

- Do you discuss politics?<sup>11</sup>
- Are you interested in politics?

The measurement of economic perceptions is an index based on the following survey questions, computed in a similar way as the index above.

- How do you assess the Portuguese economy?
- How do you assess the change in the Portuguese economy?
- How do you assess your personal economic conditions?
- How do you assess the changes in your personal economic conditions?

The measurement of pro-immigrant sentiments is an index based on the following survey questions, computed in a similar way as the index above:

- Do you think that immigration enriches Portuguese society?
- Do you think that immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of Portugal? (Coding inverted.)
- Do you think that immigrants are good for the Portuguese economy?

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